

# the Emily

Thursday, November 27, 1986

Volume 5, Number 2

## Strip Search Protest Grows

by Sian Bond

The strip search of Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer, two Irish women held on remand as Category A prisoners in Brixton Jail, goes on unabated. In a recent letter to *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* Ella told us that in the month of December 1985 she was strip searched 22 times, had 20 body-searches, 3 cell searches and 2 cell changes. Martina was strip-searched 23 times, had 16 body-searches, 5 cell searches and 2 cell changes. It must be noted that the figures for strip-searching do not include Sundays, as the women are never strip-searched on a Sunday.

All this intimidation and harassment in the guise of security takes place when the women should be having their free association time. They are already locked up for up to 22 hours a day, now when they are unlocked all the time is eaten up by strip-searches, etc.

Joy Kinsley, notorious for her in-

human treatment of the women in Holloway prison, is now governor of Brixton jail. She has told Martina and Ella that their only entitlements are to be fed, wear clothes and have one hour out of their cells. When Ella and Martina asked Kinsley to record their complaints she told them she would record only what she saw fit to record. The trial of the two women is unlikely to be heard before May 1986 so they face at least another 5 months of this disgusting and debilitating treatment.

South London Irish Solidarity Committee held a protest meeting about strip searches on Monday 20 January at Lambeth town hall. Sharon Arkin, Lambeth Councillor (whose ward includes Brixton prison) and National Chair Labour Party Black Sections, and Lucy Frances for SLISC spoke at the meeting attended by over 30 people. Sharon Atkin made the point that what is happening in Ireland today will be happening in Britain

tomorrow unless a united campaign takes place against these repressive measures and for a united Ireland.

Solidarity messages were given by *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* City of London AA group and Isabelle Anderson, Martina's sister, sent her thanks to SLISC for all their work. The Irish Prisoners Appeal committee also made a contribution from the floor.

A recent letter from the Home Secretary to Tony Benn MP (who had taken up SLISC's complaint on the issue), ludicrously claims that Ella and Martina have been strip searched with 'as much consideration and courtesy as possible' and 'not an unreasonable' number of times. Yet even on his considerably underestimated figures, Hurd admits that Martina was strip searched eleven times between 5-10 August, that is twice a day. The campaign against this brutal practice must be stepped up.



by Jody Stamps

How far do you think you have to go to be surrounded by camouflaged army personnel carrying Uzis, a triple-layer fence topped with razor blade barbed wire, and inground anti-personnel devices? Probably not as far as you might think: 190 miles (300 kms).

The place I'm speaking of is Hanford, a 570 mile square nuclear reservation, owned and operated by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Hanford is located in a remote area along the Columbia River in the southeastern corner of Washington state.

Hanford was chosen in early 1943 by the US Army as the site

for the production of a new weapon for the federal government's Manhattan Project.

On August 9, 1945, the city of Nagasaki was bombed, killing over 80,000 people immediately. This bomb was fueled by a new, deadly, radioactive material — Plutonium 239 — non-existent in nature, but created at Hanford.

Since 1944, over 60 percent of all plutonium in the US has been created at Hanford. This plutonium is used for creating warheads. Up until 1965, Hanford had 7 working nuclear reactors, among other facilities, such as the Plutonium Uranium Extraction facility (PUREX) used to refine the plutonium produced by the N-reactor built in 1956. These facilities have produced approximately 75 metric tons of weapons grade plutonium — enough to make 7,500 Nagasaki disasters!

Today Hanford has only one N-reactor remaining in production. The others, though no longer productive, cannot be decommission-

ed, for no one has the technology to do so. Their radiation level is so high a human being cannot enter them. The remaining reactor, built in 1963, is similar to the Chernobyl reactor in design, but it differs in many ways. It is 23 years old; its graphite core is warped and swollen, the cooling system, pumps and valves are worn, and it is generally deteriorating. But the DOE reassures us that the N-reactor is safe, even though they recently (October 1986) closed it down for 30 days for "inspection" (due to safety and procedure violations).

Where does the waste go from these two facilities you might well ask? Liquid radioactive waste from the N-reactor is poured into "cribs" on the site. A crib is nothing more than an area surrounded by dirt. It takes very little time for this waste to be absorbed into the land and reach the Columbia River. It is also piped into underground tanks, with out safety standards. On September 29, 1986 liquid waste nar-

rowly missed being poured into an already full tank — this would have created what is called a "critical occurrence" (a nuclear chain reaction). At one point, 400,000 gallons of this waste had leaked out of these tanks, before Rockwell (a company with a large interest in the reactor) ever discovered anything was wrong!

The dry waste is put into 55 gallon barrels, placed on cement flats, fenced in and covered with dirt. The "half-life" of plutonium is 24,000 years; what's the "half-life" of a barrel? The PUREX plant has plutonium coming out of its "smoke" stacks and over 100 million gallons of liquid waste is discharged annually, into the ground.

That's not the end of it: Hanford is being looked at as a waste dump for all the nuclear waste produced in the US. The plan is to drill holes, 20 feet in diameter, into the ground and inject the waste into them. These holes would be drilled through 7 layers of basalt rock, 6

miles from the Columbia River and approximately 10 feet from the water table.

Currently, the US has approximately 25,500 warheads of all types from a nine-megaton hydrogen bomb to back pack size atomic land mines. By 1988, the DOE plans to increase this stockpile to 28,000 warheads. It has been unofficially estimated that the DOE has about 100 tons of plutonium and 700 tons of uranium. It takes 5 pounds of plutonium or 20 pounds of U-235 to make a small warhead. To meet this increase in demand a New Production Reactor may be built (at Hanford) in the 1990's. The obvious question is: why produce any more? The DOE's answer: in the name of national security, of course. It's nice to know what price the Federal Government of the US puts on our lives.

Source: Joanne Oleksiak, Hanford Clearinghouse, "Chernobyl in BC?" seminar in Vancouver, November 3, 1986.



# A New Exciting Form of EXPLOITATION

by Catherine Perrin

I received this article in the mail recently from a friend of mine who said that he didn't really want to subject me to the horror of it but that he felt that he *needed* to have me be aware of it.

Upon reading the article I understood his ambivalence. I don't want to have to share this with you because I empathize with the feelings you will have, but I *need* to make you aware of it, as I have been made aware. And, honestly, I feel that I simply cannot bear the knowledge of this by myself. Somehow sharing this article with others helps me to define, diffuse and come to terms with my own reaction.

I am having an extremely intense reaction to this new "fad." I feel personally hurt; in fact I feel beaten by the fact that this kind of violent degradation is being condoned and encouraged in our society. I also feel vulnerable and frightened as a woman. I am sickened!

Mostly, though, I am very, very angry, and am more determined than ever before to work and fight for equality for women. It is time, in light of this kind of activity, to renew and revitalize our efforts in the women's movement. We *must* save ourselves and our sisters from this kind of hatred and violence, and we must work to help men come to terms with our newly gained independence and power. More than ever I feel, since reading this article, that our lives are in danger in a very real and terrifying sense.

## Bar Wars

Guns and moving targets in a new kind of combat zone

by Bob Greene

The continuing evolution of relationships between men and women can take us down a twisting and uncharted highway, with unexpected stops along the way. And so tonight we find ourselves in a bar called B.T.'s, in Dearborn, Michigan. It is nearing 11:00 p.m., and the crowd is getting restless.

There are approximately 150 men packed into the bar. For most of the evening, loud rock music has been playing. Now though, the music has been turned off, and the men are crowding toward the stage in anticipation.

"All right," yells Rick Salas, the bar's night manager, into a microphone. "We're loading up the guns and getting our ammo ready."

Silently, employees of the bar circulate through the crowd, handing black plastic miniature Uzi submachine guns to the men. The miniature Uzis are built not to fire bullets, but to emit hard streams of water.

"Remember," Salas shouts into the mike, "share the guns with the guys at your table."

A woman named Brandy climbs onto the stage. She is wearing a skimpy T-shirt and a bottom that is a cross between a G-string and a pair of bikini underpants.

A heavy-metal song begins to boom through the bar's speaker system. Brandy lifts her arms to cover her face. The men in the bar lean forward, taking aim with their miniature Uzis, and as Brandy

stands stark still, they begin to shoot her in the crotch.

The phenomenon started in the Detroit area last summer. Various bars promoted it with various names, but the one that stuck — the one that people used generically when discussing these evenings — was Rambo Wet-Panty Nights.

The concept was simple. The women would take to the stage, the music would start, and the men would aim and shoot between the women's legs. Tonight, seven women have been slated to be shot, one at a time. B.T.'s is a topless bar, and some of the women who will participate are among the bar's regular dancers. Others are "amateurs," who are here because of cash prizes that are given out for the women who do the best job of being shot at — a hundred dollars for first place, fifty for second, twenty-five for third.

The noise level of the bar rises dramatically as each new woman climbs up on the stage and the "open fire" command is given by Rick Salas. The men are whooping and screaming. They are leaning forward, in combat stances, looking down the barrels of the sub-machine guns and making sure that their aim is true.

From all directions, the streams of water converge on the women's crotches. It is impossible to tell their reactions form a seat in the audience; virtually every one of the women does what Brandy did: covers her face, partly to protect her eyes from errant shots, partly, one suspects, to avoid looking at what is happening out there.

When Rick Salas gives the "cease fire" order after each woman has been shot, the women are directed to dance and to roll around in the slop on the wet stage. Meanwhile, other female employees of the bar are on top of the customers' individual tables, providing more titillation for the already aroused men.

One woman, wearing only a G-string, is crouched atop a table that accommodates four customers. The men are watching the other men shooting at a woman on the stage. The woman crouched on the table takes a piece of ice from one of the customers' drinks and rubs it across her right nipple. At another table another woman is crouched and surrounded by men. The men are hooting as their compatriots fire the guns. One of the men, apparently overcome with excitement, takes his glass of beer and pours in on the bare chest of the woman who is crouching on top of his table. Seemingly unfazed, the woman uses both of her hands to massage the sticky liquid into her breasts.

"Come on!" exhorts Rick Salas into the microphone. "Shoot those guns! If you guys were like this in Vietnam, we would have won the war!"

The woman on the stage, her eyes covered with her hands, continues to be assaulted by the shots aimed between her legs. "Born in the U.S.A." is blasting through the speakers.

Out in the audience, a man Rolf, who identifies himself as a computer-marketing specialist,

leans forward and presses on the trigger of his Uzi.

"I got her," he yells above the bedlam. "I got her. She's hot; I know she likes it. She likes it, and she know I know she likes it."

A man named Ron, who says that he works for a plastics-manufacturing company, shouts, "You work hard all day, and this is a release. I worked twelve hours today, and this is a way to get some aggression out."

"There's a woman where I work who's about to get married. I keep asking her out, and she keeps saying no, because of the wedding. I know I could nail her, but she won't give me a chance. I think of her being up on that stage, so I could shoot at her."

A man named Dave, who identifies himself as an auto worker, says, "You don't get to do something like this every day. I've shot a .357, a shotgun, a .30-30, and a .44 Magnum. But how many times do you get to shoot a girl in the pussy? This is great."

Waitresses are circulating, saying in calm voices to the men with the guns, "Would anyone like another drink?"

A man named Jonathan, who says he is a batch processor in a chemical factory, says, "This gives you a feeling of power and authority. The ultimate machoism. I'm aiming at her clitoris. She knows I'm shooting at her crotch and she knows it's me and she gets stimulation from it."

A man named Ron, who works at an auto assembly plant, bellows, "It's nice. It's nice. I think that those girls like standing up in front of men and getting shot. Maybe they don't like it at first, but when they get all wet they've got to like it. They've got to like it."

As each woman finishes her turn on the stage, she goes to a dressing room in the back to dry off and change back into street clothes.

A woman named Rio says, "It didn't feel very good. This was the first time that I ever did it. I didn't know what to expect. Men in a place like this, they see tits all the time. But I didn't know what a bunch of animals they were going to turn into when they got guns in their hands."

"I was a little bit scared. Some of the men put their beer and their wine and their drinks into the guns, and that can hurt your eyes if it hits you there. I guess they're having fun, but I don't know. Maybe I shouldn't be surprised. What can you expect when you put a gun in a person's hand?"

Brandy, the first woman to be shot at, says, "I thought it was great. I had a good time. I think it turns the men on, and that's fine with me. It's kind of a high for me — it really is. I didn't have any bad feelings at all. I just hope the guys who were shooting at me liked it as much as I did. I'll tell you one thing — I'm married, and when I get home tonight my husband and I are going to have a good time."

A woman named Kimberly says, "It was definitely exciting and unusual. I guess the men are being immature in a way, but hey — if their fantasy is shooting a woman, it doesn't bother me. If they want

to play, I'll play too."

A woman named Marty says, "They're all with their buddies, and they want to impress their friends. It's a power game. Most of the women cover their faces when they're up there, but I try to look out into the audience and make eye contact with as many of the men with the guns as I can. A lot of times, they'll turn away. If a woman looks them in the eye, they'll turn away."

"They'd rather not think of a woman staring them right back in the eye. And I know what they're thinking — they look up onstage and they think I'm a bitch, and they want to shoot the bitch. But I'm not a bitch, and I won't be intimidated by them. I'm not a bitch."

A woman named Kelly says, "I don't really think about it when I'm up there. I know that there's a lot of guys out there who want to shoot me because it gives them a good time, and they think it's fun. I don't feel as if I'm being used, but I really don't get any satisfaction out of it, either. When I was a little girl, I wanted to grow up to be an actress. I know now that that's never going to happen. That was just a childhood dream. Being up there onstage being shot at — that may not be acting, but it's entertaining. That's as close as I'll probably ever come."

A woman named Kim, who won the hundred-dollar first prize, says, "How does it feel? It feels degrading. What do I think is going through the men's minds? Frankly, I don't care what's going through their minds. I don't care about them at all. I see them going crazy and banging their heads on the edge of the stage, but I don't think about what they may be thinking. I would never go out with a guy who shoots at me. They may have fantasies, but I don't care what they are. I just block it all out and think of the money I can win. It's healthier."

Now all of the shooting has ended, and Rick Salas has left the microphone and is relaxing in a back office.

"I used to play Army when I was a kid," Salas says. "I dug it. Then Vietnam came around, and everyone was anti-American, antiwar, anti-Army. Even if you liked war games or war movies or war itself, it wasn't something that other people looked up to."

"Sure, there's a little pent-up anger out in our audience. They like shooting at the girls, because the girls are hot and they're good-looking and it's a female body up there. But I really can't tell if they're shooting at the girl's crotch or, say, they're shooting at Libya or Nicaragua. It all becomes the same thing."

Alan Markovitz, the owner of B.T.'s comes in and muses about the other side of the question: not why the men shoot the guns, but why the women go onstage and permit it.

"I ask myself that a lot," he says. "I think a lot of it comes from the fact that many of these girls come from broken homes and got very little attention when they were children. I think that one of the things they're doing onstage — apart from competing for money — is finally getting that attention."

Granted, it's a strange way to get attention, but it is attention of one kind."

Rick Salas continues: "We provide a place where guys can get loose and no one has to know about it. I'll admit that some of these guys are frustrated and have to let their frustrations out this way. But that's okay. When the guns are in their hands, they're in control, and they have free rein. They don't have to hold anything in."

"But is there anyone out there who would take a real gun in his hand, and who would shoot it at a real woman? I like to think not."

Out in the main part of the bar, the entertainment has gone back to topless dancing. The Uzis have all been stored until next time, and the remaining men in the bar are looking at the dancers up on the stage.

A visitor to B.T.'s, who has observed all this and has been stunned by it, is preparing to go home. As he is walking through the bar, he finds himself standing next to a dancer named Darlene. Darlene has not been shot at tonight; she will not agree to participate in that particular entertainment. Now, though, she is preparing to go back up onstage for the more conventional topless performance.

"What did you think of tonight?" Darlene asks the visitor.

The visitor says that he cannot quite find words for it. The anger he had seen in the room, the naked hostility in the faces of the men who had been firing the Uzis at the women . . . the visitor says that now he must go back and put it all down on paper, and he is not sure exactly how he will be able to do it.

"Think of it as a dream," Darlene says. "That's how I handle it. I see it and I keep telling myself: it's only a dream . . ."

Bob Greene is a contributing editor of Esquire magazine.



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# HEALTH: Women and Aids

## Why should women be concerned about AIDS?

In North America, most people with AIDS are men. Up to the end of January, 1986, there have been only two cases of women with AIDS in Ontario. However, because AIDS is a sexually-transmitted disease, women can become infected and infect others. They can carry the virus and pass it to their infants in the womb, during birth or through breastfeeding.

While it is possible for women to become infected with AIDS, it is also easy for them to protect themselves from the disease. To prevent the spread of the disease, to understand its effects and to reduce their risk of exposure, women should know the facts about AIDS.

## Which groups of women are most at risk?

The AIDS virus is transmitted in four known ways:

- through certain kinds of sexual intercourse;
- through sharing contaminated needles or syringes;
- through transfusion of infected blood or blood products;
- from an infected mother to an infant in the womb, during the birthing process or through breast-milk.

Certain groups of women are at greater risk of exposure to the AIDS virus and should take precautions. They are:

- Women whose sexual partners have AIDS or are carriers of the AIDS virus;
- Prostitutes;
- Women who have multiple sexual contacts;
- Women whose sexual partners are bisexual or have had homosexual contacts since 1980 (when AIDS probably first occurred in Canada).
- Women who are intravenous drug abusers and share needles and equipment;
- Women whose sexual partners abuse drugs;
- Women who received or whose sexual partners received many blood or blood product transfusions between 1980 and November 1985 (when the Red Cross began screening blood);
- Women who have been artificially inseminated with donor semen. If the donor's blood was not tested for the AIDS virus antibody, the semen could carry the AIDS virus and the women are at a very slight risk of infection.

## How can women protect themselves against AIDS?

- The surest way to protect yourself is to avoid sexual contact with:
  - anyone whose history and health status is unknown.
  - multiple partners or with persons who have had multiple partners;
  - bisexual men or men who have had a homosexual contact since 1980;
  - persons who abuse intravenous drugs.
- If you think your sexual partner may have been exposed to the AIDS virus:
  - Insist that your partner use a condom. This will reduce some of the risk. Condoms can also pro-

tect you from other sexually-transmitted diseases such as syphilis.

— Don't indulge in any activities in which semen or blood enters the vagina, anus or mouth.

— If you want to be extra careful, abstain from "deep-kissing." The risk is slight, but the AIDS virus has been found in small amounts in the saliva of infected people and might get into another person's bloodstream through cuts or sores in the mouth.

- Don't abuse drugs. If you are an I.V. drug user, never share needles or syringes. Assistance for drug abusers is available from the Addiction Research Foundation.

- Prostitutes risk exposure to the AIDS virus. Counselling and information are available from the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT).

## What about blood transfusions?

The Red Cross has been screening all blood donations for AIDS virus antibodies since November 1, 1985. Blood that tests positive for the AIDS virus antibody is not used for transfusion. This procedure has further reduced the very slight risk of getting AIDS from blood transfusions. **You cannot get AIDS from donating blood.**

## What about artificial insemination?

If you are planning artificial insemination, check with your doctor to ensure that the donor's blood has been tested and does not contain the AIDS virus antibody.

## How can women with the AIDS virus antibody in their bloodstream protect others?

If you have AIDS or AIDS virus antibodies in your blood, you are very likely to be infectious. To reduce the risk of passing the AIDS virus to someone else:

- Tell your sexual partner
- Insist that your sexual partner use condoms;
- During your menstrual period, abstain from sexual activities that would expose your partner to your blood.
- Wrap and carefully dispose of any blood-soiled products (napkins or tampons).
- Don't share razors, toothbrushes or other implements which might be contaminated with your blood. Avoid any activities that would expose people or equipment to your blood, such as electrolysis, tattooing and ear piercing.
- Consult your doctor if you are planning a pregnancy. Infants born to infected women may acquire the AIDS virus in the womb and those who do usually die in infancy.
- The AIDS virus has also been found in breast milk. If you have a baby, consult your doctor before deciding to breast feed.
- Inform anyone who provides you with health care and many come into contact with your blood — such as doctors, dentists or nurses — so they can take adequate precautions.

## Is a woman who lives in a household with someone who has AIDS at risk?

It depends whether the contact is casual, care-giving or sexual.

With casual contact — even daily — there's no risk. Extensive

studies of families of AIDS patients have found not one case of the disease being spread through everyday contact. Not one case of AIDS has been transmitted by casual contact from parent to child, from child to brother or sister, or from child to parent. There's no danger in sharing bathrooms, food, kitchenware or clothes. There's no risk from hugging, kissing or kissing without the exchange of saliva.

If a woman is giving personal care to someone who has AIDS and may come in contact with the infected person's blood or urine, there's a very slight risk. To prevent the virus from entering her bloodstream through cuts or sores on her hands, she should wear plastic, disposable gloves and wash her hands thoroughly when handling body fluids from the AIDS patient.

If a woman has sexual relations with the person who has AIDS, the risk is much greater. She and her partner should take precautions and avoid pregnancy. They may want to contact their doctor or local public health unit for counselling.

## Many of the health care workers and laboratory staff giving care to AIDS patients are women. Are they at risk?

Only health care workers and laboratory staff who handle body fluids, such as blood, semen, feces and urine of AIDS patients are at any risk. They should follow the infection control practices and procedures recommended in their institutions and the AIDS virus will not have the opportunity to enter their bloodstreams.

Several hundred health care workers worldwide have accidentally pricked themselves with needles contaminated with the AIDS virus. Twenty-six have been found to have the AIDS virus antibody in their bloodstream. However, only three of the 26 are not members of a high risk group and, as no consistent pre-testing was done, even those three could have been exposed to the virus before their accident. As of the end of February 1986, none of the health care workers has developed AIDS.

## Are lesbians likely to get AIDS?

No. There is no evidence of AIDS being transmitted from an infected woman to another woman through sexual contact. However, contact with menstrual blood, which may contain the AIDS virus, should be avoided.

## Should women be tested for the AIDS virus antibody?

If you are not in a high-risk group (e.g. sexual partners of people with AIDS or AIDS carriers, I.V. drugs abusers, prostitutes, recipients of many blood or blood product transfusions before November 1985), you are unlikely to be exposed to the AIDS and do not need to be tested.

If you are a member of a high-risk group or think you may have been exposed to the AIDS virus, you may want to be tested. This is particularly important if you are considering having a child.

Although there is no test available that will identify the AIDS virus, there is a blood test that will tell you if you have antibodies to the AIDS

virus in your blood.

Don't make a blood donation in order to have the blood test. If you want to be tested, contact your doctor.

If the test shows that you have AIDS virus antibodies in your blood, this does not mean you have AIDS. It does mean that you have been exposed to the AIDS virus, you are likely to be infectious, and you should take precautions.

For more information, see the Ministry of Health fact sheets "Information About AIDS" and "Detecting AIDS". Or contact your doctor, your local STD (sexually-transmitted diseases) clinic, or your public health unit, which is listed in the municipal section of the blue pages in your telephone directory.

This fact sheet, and others in the series, have been produced to provide accurate information on AIDS and to tell you what is currently known about the disease. As more information becomes available, the fact sheets will be updated.

The following fact sheets are available from the Health Information Centre, 9th Floor, Hepburn Bldg, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1S2:

- Information About AIDS
- Information for Parents and Teachers
- Detecting AIDS
- Women and AIDS
- AIDS and the Workplace

This fact sheet was prepared by the Ontario Public Education Panel on AIDS (OPEPA).

*True emancipation begins neither at the polls nor in courts. It begins in woman's soul.*

**"The Tragedy of Women's Emancipation, Anarchism and Other Essays, Emma Goldman (1868-1940)**

## Women as Decision Makers

by Henry Frew

The ultimate symbol of our society, still being patriarchal, is the comparatively few women active in the political arena. This bastion of male dominance is beginning to show cracks which will hopefully transform the system and allow it to transcend its current inadequacies.

When one thinks of well known women in politics the list is undeservingly small. In the international arena only a few stand out: Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, Corazon Aquino and a select group of others. In Canada it is still news when a political party elects a woman to a key position, i.e.: Party Leader or Party President. The continued existence of the Representation by Population system of apportionments is one of the reasons for this discrepancy.

History has proven that anytime there is an inequity in the power structure, the group in control tries to retain it. There are different ways this can be rectified. One is for individual political groups to internally restructure. The new government of Norway has such a restructuring: In addition to having a female head of government, the ruling party has a policy that 40% of all positions must go to women. Thus eight members of the eighteen member cabinet are women. The President of Iceland is the only female elected head of state in Europe. Norway and Iceland have shown the way.

(con't on pg. 4)

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# The Androgenous Quest of Virginia Woolfe

(Orlando as a consumation of A Room of One's Own)

Dan Gawthrop

Classifying fiction in a socio-political context is often a difficult task, and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* is no exception. Written with a narrative style that closely resembles a biography, the novel can also be read as a straight satire, a fairy story, a fantasy or even — with all its allusions — a literary history of post-Elizabethan England. However, when one considers the extent of feminist influence in *Orlando*, Woolf's motivations become much clearer. In light of her essay *A Room of One's Own* (also written in 1928), *Orlando* can be examined as an anti-novel which advocates the "androgynous mind" in the emancipation of women writers.

At first glance, *A Room of One's Own* is a straightforward discussion of the limitations facing any creative woman of Woolf's time. How can women publish great works, and how could they ever have published great works, if they have not experienced financial independence, as well as their own private space in which to articulate their creative spirit? As Woolf recollects her visit to the university the questions become more complex. Why, for example, did men drink wine at social functions and women water? Why is one sex so prosperous and the other so poor? Finally, why do men write more books about women than women do? Her conclusion is that the social structures of the patriarchy have been in place since the beginning of time, and there have been few educational movements to

counter it.

Woolf's solution to this problem involves a unifying of both the male and female elements in each individual. Looking out her window one morning, Woolf sees a young couple meet at a street corner and get into a taxi. The moment strikes her as one of supreme equality between the sexes, not often chronicled by writers or even encouraged as a norm in the larger structures of society. She is convinced that changing one's values involves a 'unity of the mind'. A man must accept the feminine side of his brain as an influence, says Woolf, just as a woman should recognize her masculine influence. This vision of the "androgynous mind" was put forth earlier by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who believed that truly "great" thinkers recognized the unity of the sexes in one mind. Paraphrasing Coleridge in *Room*, Woolf concludes that "a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine."

Before applying this principle to *Orlando*, one must first examine androgyny in the context of women and artistic expression. To some extent Virginia Woolf wanted to prove that it was the financial dependency on men that caused women's "manners, their ideas, their very souls" to be dictated by masculine standards. But, the biggest obstacle women writers had to face was their own self-perception. There was a tendency in fiction for women to emulate the style of men completely, or to do

the opposite by disassociating themselves from masculinity.

Instead of emphasizing an issue-oriented, political feminism which could divide the society further, Woolf longed to reveal the true nature of the woman's inner soul. If women approached life in a manner that allowed both elements expression, in other words, then "their femininity would cease being a puzzle and a burden to them; they would become truly unconscious of their sex." If the two faculties of the mind do not oppose each other, consciousness can finally be realized.

*Orlando* is a difficult novel, because it compromises between two narratives in one body: the creation of a poet and the creation of a woman. As far as *Orlando*'s status as a poet is concerned, one must consider that the extent of a progressive woman's influence on the Victorian literary society is questionable, especially when the society as a whole embraced the traditional values of "Purity, Chastity and Modesty." In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf expresses similar sentiments to those of *Orlando*, who laments the chauvinism of Pope; in her essay though, it is Woolf's own contemporaries who lack the androgynous vision. Recognized giants of the literary world, like Kipling and Galsworthy, belong to the Edwardian school of writing, which is essentially materialist. These men could write only with the male side of their brains, and were therefore one-dimensional.

Unlike the more spiritual Geor-

gians, such as James Joyce, Kipling and Galsworthy were too concerned with details and not enough with capturing the real essence of a person or a feeling. The masculine approach, is dictated by a formulaic standard of "comedy, tragedy, love interest and an air of probability." But while Joyce was aware that there is more to life than mere externals, he may have been over-reacting to the banalities of the Edwardian era; he had to "smash windows" with his anger to discover the truth, and this was one approach Virginia Woolf, as a feminist, had to avoid if she were to receive any recognition for her cause. Within a fictional context, the same can be said about *Orlando*'s character.

As a revisionist philosopher, Woolf was far from being an uncritical partisan of the feminist movement. She hoped to unite the sexes by examining the weaknesses of both — especially of men, since they held the power in society. Woolf accepted the notion that "a woman's writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine." But the problem remains in your perception of what is "feminine," and as Woolf suggests in her essay "Women Novelists," perhaps there is a need for further definition. Woolf was bound to get into trouble with critics about subjective input to her novels: while she writes in *Room* that "it is fatal for a woman to lay the least stress on any grievance," the entire second half of *Orlando* is full of subtle "Grievances."

The problem of Woolf's subjectivity is irrelevant, however, when one considers the impact of her argument for androgyny. Earlier in *Room*, Woolf likens women to a "looking glass" in which men see themselves; a man's sense of superiority is reinforced, she says, by the obedience of the looking glass. But once women decide to tell the truth, "the figure in the looking glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished." This is a great threat to men like Mussolini and Napoleon, who "insist so emphatically on the inferiority of women." This paints a rather bleak outlook on the masculine psyche, but Woolf was not one to ignore the dangerous potential of the patriarchy. In that sense, her analogy should be noted. It is no coincidence that the "Writer's Preface" of *Orlando* includes a glowing acknowledgement of several, male writers, from Defoe to Macaulay: indeed, "no one can read or write without being perpetually in the debt of" these men, and for their input to her "male self," Woolf is truly grateful! But now that she has set a precedent for the unity of the sexes within the mind, one gathers that it is up to the great male writers to follow suit. One can only wonder, in this respect how a more liberated man like Coleridge would have reacted to Woolf's version of the "androgynous mind," given the similarity of their vision.

(con't from pg. 3)

This shift to a system of Proportional Representation appears to be what is needed. This would allow for a more reasonable partition of political power. This, in itself, would weaken the inbred power of certain long established lobby groups. Much as been achieved in Canada of late by the work of Jeanne Sauve, the current Governor General of Canada. Proportional Representation could be used to alter many inequities from the centralization of political decision making in Ontario and Quebec. The racial inequities, such as the dominance (90%) of white-anglo-saxon or other European Members of Parliament could also be eliminated by this process.

Could not the system of proportional representation in government also alleviate the sexual misrepresentation of the power structure in business? Could we ask that, since 51% of the provincial population is female, the representation in the legislature should show a similar balance?

To bring this to a level which closely concerns all of us, here at the University of Victoria, where 55% of the student population is female, it is not unreasonable to say that a proportional number of the positions available on the Alma Mater Society ought to go to female students?

## the Emily STAFF BOX

This issue is edited by Jody Stamps and Heather Gray. Contributors to this issue: Catherine Perrin, Dan Gawthrop, Ministry of Health, Sian Bond (From: Fight Racism Fight Imperialism), Henry Frew, Jody Stamps, Heather Gray.

Graphic Design and Lay-out by: Jody Stamps



TAKE PART!!  
The Emily is interested in receiving articles for publication particularly those concerning women's issues: interviews, poetry, essays, commentaries or critiques. For more information contact Jody Stamps at the Women's Centre or phone 382-7661.

## Calendar

### UVIC WOMEN'S CAUCUS

Meeting times and locations posted in Women's Centre, SUB.

### UVIC WOMEN'S CENTRE COLLECTIVE

Mondays and Tuesdays at 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.  
Weekly meetings at the Women's Centre, SUB

### THE EMILY

Mondays and Tuesdays at 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.  
Weekly announcements and information given during Women's Centre meetings, SUB

### STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION GROUP

Thursday-at-Noon discussions, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.  
213-620 View Street

Weekly informal presentations. Bring your lunch!  
Office collective meets the third Monday of the month, 7:30 p.m. at the office. New members welcome. For more information contact Debby Gregory, 381-1012.

### BOOK DISCUSSION

Wednesdays 12:00 noon  
Women's Centre, SUB

### "CHICKEN SOUP" DAY

Thursdays 11:30 - 12:30 p.m.  
Women's Centre, SUB. The cure for all ails!